

Lansdale Quarrels Over Kennedy 'Order'

By Norman Kempster
Washington Star Staff Writer

Retired Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale says he was not ordered by Robert F. Kennedy to plan the assassination of Fidel Castro or to take "direct action of any sort" against the Cuban premier.

Lansdale issued a terse statement yesterday after The Washington Star published an interview with him in which he was quoted as saying Robert Kennedy, the brother of President John F. Kennedy, told him to develop a wide range of options for "getting rid of" Castro.

Elaborating on his statement in a telephone interview last night, Lansdale said, "In 1962 I was doing some planning for the President's consideration about meeting possible threats to the United States from Cuba. Perhaps some place in the plans there was something to do about the leader (Castro) who had threatened the lives of millions of Americans."

BUT LANSDALE said he "ruled out assassination" in his planning because "that is not my bag anyway." He added he was "not under orders" from Robert Kennedy.

The Star yesterday quoted Lansdale as saying that Robert Kennedy had directed him to plan some sort of action against Castro. He said then that the former attorney general had not used the word "assassination" although the discussion clearly included murder as one option.

"The project for disposing of Castro envisioned the whole spectrum of plans from overthrowing the Cuban leader to assassinating him," Lansdale was quoted in the dispatch by staff writer Jeremiah O'Leary.

After Lansdale issued his statement, O'Leary reiterated that his original story was an accurate reflection of what Lansdale had told him.

QUESTIONED LAST NIGHT, Lansdale said his earlier words must have been misinterpreted. He said his plans envisioned a wide range of possibilities such as economic action, psychological warfare and "you name it." But he said conventional military operations were not included in the plan and assassination was ruled out.

Lansdale issued his statement describing The Star report as "a distortion of my remarks" following a storm of protest from former aides to Robert Kennedy.

In separate telephone interviews, Kennedy associates Frank Mankiewicz

and Adam Walinsky accused Lansdale of participating in a CIA-backed plot to blame the former attorney general and his brother, the President, for illegal activities undertaken by the CIA.

"Gen. Lansdale's allegation is just another part of the CIA's massive attempt to cover-up its crimes by blaming them on two dead men," Walinsky said.

MANKIEWICZ SAID Lansdale "has never been anything but a CIA man."

Lansdale, an expert on counterinsurgency programs who was once a favorite of President Kennedy and his brother, has been widely reported to have been a CIA agent who used an Air Force commission as a "cover." Prior to his assignment to Washington, Lansdale had served in the Philippines and South Vietnam as an adviser to governments faced with guerrilla warfare.

Asked if he was in the CIA in 1962, Lansdale said, "I was not. I was a regular Air Force officer." Asked if he was denying he had ever been in the CIA, Lansdale replied, "I did not say that."

The original Star report also quoted a former high-ranking CIA official, who declined to be named, as saying that Robert Kennedy precipitated the 1962 CIA planning for the destruction of Castro and his regime.

Lansdale is scheduled to testify next week before the Senate Select Intelligence Committee headed by Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho. The Church committee, which holds its sessions behind closed doors, is trying to determine the chain of command that ordered CIA assassination plots against Castro and probably other foreign leaders.

CHURCH HAS SAID the committee "has received 'hard evidence' of assassination planning and of murder attempts by the CIA during a period of about six years beginning late in the Eisenhower administration and continuing until early in the Johnson administration. But Church has said

be able to discover if former Presidents Kennedy or Eisenhower specifically authorized assassinations.

Church revealed earlier that former mobster John Roselli provided details of a Mafia plot against Castro which began in 1960, during the Eisenhower administration, and involved several attempts on the Cuban premier's life during the next several years.

The Church committee also has questioned former CIA official William Harvey, who was identified as the CIA contact for the Mafia plot which involved Roselli and Sam Giancana, the gangland figure who was murdered last month.

IN HIS INTERVIEW with O'Leary, Lansdale was quoted as saying he instructed Harvey to develop contingency plans for disposing of Castro.

"I was thinking in terms of Cuban exiles," Lansdale was quoted as saying. "There were plenty of them talking about Castro and their hatred for him. But I never heard anything about any involvement of the Mafia with the CIA until recently."

Lansdale was quoted as adding, "It would have been highly unusual if I had known the details (of Harvey's activities). I was relaying instructions to him from the highest authority in the land. I was often in conversation with President Kennedy and his brother."

O'Leary said last night he asked Lansdale in the interview, "The chain of command was from Bobby to you to Harvey?" He said Lansdale replied in the affirmative. That exchange was not included in the original story.

Questioned last night, Lansdale would say only

Harvey" about the contingency planning.

"I don't know what Harvey was doing," Lansdale said.

BOTH MANKIEWICZ and Walinsky stressed that the Harvey-Mafia plot had been under way for about two years before Lansdale's 1962 action.

Walinsky also related that in 1967 Robert Kennedy had told him that when he (Kennedy) heard of the Mafia contract on Castro he ordered it stopped.

Walinsky said the former attorney general said he learned of the plot "not from the agency but from another mobster who claimed to have immunity (from prosecution for an unrelated crime)."

Neither Mankiewicz nor Walinsky was associated with Robert Kennedy in 1962. Both said they based their belief that Kennedy had not suggested assassination of Castro on what the former attorney general told them later.

In his statement, Lansdale seemed to choose his words with extreme care.

"I can say that I never received orders from either President Kennedy or Robert Kennedy to take direct action of any sort against Castro," he said. The original interview had not suggested any orders came from President Kennedy nor had it quoted Lansdale as referring to "direct action." The planning Lansdale was quoted as describing clearly was indirect from his standpoint.

In the interview last night, Lansdale acknowledged he was frequently in contact with Robert Kennedy. But concerning the contingency plans for Cuba, he said, "I wouldn't even say that I did talk to him. I wasn't under his orders."

P-Kempster, Norman
Lansdale, Edward
Kennedy, Robert F.
CIA 4-01 ASSASSINATION
CASTRO, Fidel
CIA 1-04 HARVEY, William
ORG. MAFIA